

INFECTIOUS DISEASE RISKS IN THE POST-DISASTER DAYS MAY POSE A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

Stating that traumas were the most significant cause of death and illness in the first days of earthquakes, Istanbul Gelisim University Faculty of Health Sciences Public Health Specialist Asst. Prof. Dr. Nurten Elkin underlined that the risk of contagious diseases will increase if nutrition, shelter, hygiene and healthy drinking and utility water cannot be provided.

Among the communicable diseases in disaster areas, the cold season increases the likelihood of acute respiratory tract infections, and also water and food-borne diseases and contact-transmitted (scabies, lice and fungi, etc.) can take place. Asst. Prof. Dr. Nurten Elkin, Public Health Specialist from the Faculty of Health Sciences of Istanbul Gelisim University (IGU), stated that the crowded temporary settlements after the earthquake is a separate risk factor for infectious diseases.

FOLLOWINGS SHOULD BE DONE TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASES!

Disruptions in immunization services provided to infants and children in the earthquake area may also affect the risk, frequency and severity of infection. Asst. Prof. Dr. Nurten Elkin listed the points to be considered in order to reduce the risk of contagious diseases as follows:

- * Rapid provision of shelter needs,
- * Ensuring hygienic conditions as much as possible,
- * Providing clean drinking and utility water,
- * Individuals should pay attention to their personal hygiene and ensure correct hand-washing behavior,
- * Providing healthy food and nutrition,
- * Taking measures to ensure fluid intake in diarrheal diseases, informing families and distributing ORS packages for water and salt loss if signs of dehydration are observed, or informing families about their preparation,
- * Commencement of immunization studies, (Tetanus, influenza vaccination for the risk group and the continuation of the routine childhood immunization program)
- * Regular follow-up of tuberculosis patients and non-interruption of drug use,
- * Meeting toilet needs and continuity of hygiene rules,
- * Determining and recording the number and characteristics of the affected people, providing the health service that these individuals need,
- * Working in cooperation with the relevant institutions in order to carry out preventive health services for the environment related to the proper collection of wastes, garbage, animal dead and rendering them harmless,
- * Disinfectant supply and distribution is significant.

“DAILY WATER REQUIREMENT PER PERSON IS ACCEPTED AS 20 LITERS DURING DISASTER PERIODS”

Asst. Prof. Dr. Elkin said, “During disaster periods, the daily water requirement per person is 20 liters. It is very crucial to create the conditions for providing bottled water to the disaster victims in the disaster area. Accordingly, the amount of safe water required by the affected population in the region for drinking, eating and cleaning can be determined. One of the basic information about individual water disinfection is that it is safest to boil the water for one minute in cases where the need for bottled water cannot be met in the disaster area. If the altitude is above 2000 meters, it is necessary to boil the water for 3 minutes. If boiling is not possible, disinfecting the water with chlorine is another method.”

WARNING FROM THE EXPERT: IF THE FOOD IS NOT PROTECTED FROM THESE DANGERS, IT CAN LEAD TO DISEASES

After the earthquake, the epicenter of which was Kahramanmaraş and causing great destruction in 10 provinces, disaster relief materials began to be sent to disaster areas. The most significant issue to be considered in the preparation of these packages, especially in which basic food products are sent, is to ensure food safety. Asli Muslu Can, Food Engineer Msc from Istanbul Gelisim University, Gelisim Vocational School, Food Technology Program warned: If the food sent to earthquake zones is not protected from physical, chemical and microbiological hazards, food-borne diseases may occur.

While search and rescue efforts continue in earthquake areas, urgently needed aid packages are sent to disaster areas. One of the most crucial points in these packages, where especially basic food products are prepared, is undoubtedly to ensure food safety. Lect. Asli Muslu Can, a Food Engineer from Istanbul Gelişim University warned: If the food sent to earthquake zones is not protected from physical, chemical and microbiological hazards, food-borne diseases may occur.

AID WITHOUT TAKING NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS CAN CAUSE MORE HARM

Food safety is known as the protection of food from physical, chemical and microbiological hazards. Lect. Asli Muslu Can, a Food Engineer from Istanbul Gelisim University (IGU) Food Technology Program stated the following: "If the safety of the food products to be sent to the earthquake zone is not ensured, food-borne diseases will occur. The most common foodborne diseases are foodborne microbiological diseases. While it manifests itself in the form of abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, it sometimes causes serious health problems and even death.

Stating that it is necessary to be sensitive in aids to earthquake areas, Food Engineer Asli Muslu Can also underlined that aid made without taking the necessary precautions can cause more harm to people in disaster areas.

FOODS WITH A HIGH GLYCEMIC INDEX SHOULD NOT BE SENT!

Since the immune systems of the people in the region may weaken due to the bad conditions, earthquake victims, especially children, pregnant women and the elderly, should not consume foods with a high glycemic index. Lect. Asli Muslu Can;
Nuts instead of products such as biscuits, candy, chocolate,
Dried fruit (especially black grapes with seeds, dates, apricots and figs),
Fibrous granola bars with prebiotic properties,
Unsweetened fruit purees prepared in the form of chocolate,
If biscuits are to be sent, they must be nutritionally enriched,
It is more appropriate to send the immune-supporting propolis-honey mixtures, black elderberry-carob extract and probiotic kephir or direct probiotic.

HOW SHOULD THE SAFETY OF THE FOOD SENT TO THE EARTHQUAKE ZONE BE ENSURED?

1. If a food is to be sent by applying a pre-treatment, mask, bone, gloves must be worn during the preparation phase. The preparation area must be hygienic. No contamination should be caused. The expiry dates of the raw materials used should be checked.
2. Drinkable water should be used in the preparation of foods.
3. The environment in which products such as sandwiches, cookies, pastries, which will be consumed without any heat treatment after being sent, are prepared must be very clean.
4. After the food is prepared, it should be packaged in an airtight manner and labeled. Best before date, ingredients and allergen warning should be written on the label information.
5. Foods past or near expiry date should not be sent.
6. Meat and vegetables should not be sent to areas without cooking facilities. Because if these products cannot be consumed, they will be subject to microbial deterioration in a short time and harm living things.
7. If meat and meat products, milk and dairy products are to be sent to the region, they must be sent by maintaining the cold chain.
8. Canned food with cracks should never be sent to earthquake victims. Especially canned food prepared at home is very dangerous in terms of food safety.
9. If milk is to be sent, UHT (Ultra-High Temperature) milk should be preferred as it has a long shelf life. Raw milk should not be sent.



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